# The Painter-Gravers of America

## First Annual Year Book



New York MCMXVIII

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### FIRST ANNUAL YEAR BOOK

of the

## PAINTER-GRAVERS OF AMERICA

With an etching by Eugene Higgins and an introductory note by Albert Sterner

> NEW YORK 1917-18

ME ME P. 4

Etching
"Transferring the Pup"
By Eugene Higgins





#### Introductory Note

T this portentous moment when most of the civilized world is in mad upheaval through materialistic combat, it may seem unnecessary to be concerned with the development of any art movement. But the vocation of the artist is a persistent and patient one; his work is inevitable and by his endeavor consciously and unconsciously he is

destined to stem and correct the ugly, the commonplace and to stand against the overwhelming tendencies of sordid commercialism.

In the United States this call to the true artist is of unlimited importance. If at certain periods of social development the artistic movement is unapparent, it is nevertheless true that all peoples have responded to the power of expression in the artist even though the artists themselves have generally been ill understood during their lives and sparely followed in their experiments and undertakings.

In the World Democracy now straining for birth the situation of Art and the Artist is most important and it is doubly necessary that the handful of true artists be as staunch to their flag and as faithful to their beliefs as the fiercest band of soldiers is to theirs.

For when the material battle is over the maimed artisan will again seek inspiration and aspiration—he will remember Beauty and Joy—the joy of sincere workmanship in the security of his home and he will need the artist—and the artist will come closer to the artisan. So in the new Democracy there may be a refinding of something akin to the old guild—a useful position and standing for the artist.

Already vague sporadic movements have occurred in this direction but not being supported, have in most cases failed.

Little account is held by our people of the career of the real student of special proclivities, be he artist, engineer, philosopher, poet or doctor. He is called upon to be learned in his vocation and besides to be as astute as the business man—to be, as it were, an advertiser or to remain neglected and unknown. This state of things can only be remedied by the people when they have learned to consider art, the vocations, neither as a luxury nor as a business, but as higher necessary factors to be kept pure and fine in civilized community life.

The conditions under which the artist works in this very commercial age are not by any means propitious for his best development. After all that most important part of him—his stamp, so to speak—his particular manner of arriving at a result needs long and patient study; a constant hurried output is distinctly inimmical to such development and the bias and influence on the artist of the man who sells art in the market-place is more than often pernicious. Yet the young artist working to-day, if he has not means to live, must get them by his work and is forced into both conditions I have mentioned. He must either work directly for commercial purposes or if he makes something that he desires to make, wait for a chance purchaser. In the latter case he can give his work to be sold by the dealer. The dealer naturally must make money. He must pay for his shop which is in a fashionable location. His expenses, which are heavy, must be met. He naturally sells the article which makes most profit for him and his endeavor is to raise the prices of these by regular market methods-too often regardless of quality or merit. This is perfectly legitimate from the dealer's standpoint, but the artist has another standpoint to uphold—that of the integrity of his work, and seeks to be able to live by and be employed honorably in the craft he has learned and worked for years to perfect.

Compared with its vast population there is but a handful of artists in the United States—yet many of these are not employed—they are neither sought directly by the people nor by the dealer until they have acquired fame, or produce what the merchant can sell in the market he creates. Native talent, as I have pointed out, lacks adequate means for the disposal of its output—is too often frustrated before it can develop or is discouraged through too long a period of hopeless struggle.

One of the intentions of the Painter Gravers is the endeavor and desire to cope with these conditions and if possible to ameliorate them. Its constitution is conceived in a manner for fostering the advent of American talent, for the encouragement, exhibition and sale through the country of the work of its members and of the work of the younger men as they appear. The undertaking is naturally a difficult one and can only hope to succeed by the aid of the people and the adherence to the organization as Patron Members, of large

numbers interested in the work—through the whole of the United States.

It is the purpose of the Society to bring collector and artist constantly in closer touch—in the belief that a real interest in the work of native contemporary artists will thereby be stimulated.

HE desire for reproducing designs so that they might be distributed began simultaneously with the discovery of printing about the middle of the 15th Century. Before that missals were written and the accompanying illuminations or illustrations were unique, that is, belonged solely to the book they were printed in.

Wood-block printing—an artist's design translated by an engraver into lines cut on a block of wood—with the possibility of putting pigment on the cut surface and pressing it off on to paper, etc.—is no doubt the first step in the history of reproductive pictorial printing.

From this invention or discovery all other known processes of pictorial reproduction may be said to proceed.

The most primitive means of pictorial expression may be traced indefinitely back to the "line." The child—the savage through the ages has used the line to express the impressions of things he has observed. The line then in all its varied possibilities has remained and will forever remain the basis of artistic pictorial reproduction.

At various epochs by different races this linear expression of drawing has been conventionalized and from such proceeding are derived the "alphabets" of languages or the primal translations of animal forms—flower forms, plant forms, etc., into everlasting ornament. Thus the savage observes the teeth of the animals he has killed and makes a zigzag with which he ornaments his spear or pot or rafter. Between the development of this primal impression and expression lies the whole history of drawing.

All antiquity before the early Renaissance with little exception inclined definitely to the use of the symbol in Art—the form or forms agreed upon and transmitted from artist to artist—and accepted as language by the spectator (the hieroglyphs of the Egyptian obelisks, etc.).

This was natural enough in periods when no printing existed and when pictorial expression was the common means—perhaps only means of disseminating messages to the people. Much of the message of religion was given to the people by pictorial means and the legends and sagas of tribes, etc., are responsible for the desire and invention of expressive pictorial symbol.

With the Renaissance—and its realization of greater individualism—began the invention or discovery of those forms of pictorial reproduction which have been enriched and handed on to us—methods still in use. Engraving is naturally the first of these.

As before stated the idea of lowering or raising a surface by cutting, putting pigment on the plate or block and then taking an impression on paper or cloth was the first manifestation of printing.

Wood was the first material used—and later the metal plate—steel and copper—and brass were found available. The mezzotint is a form of Engraving. Details of these inventions are not necessary for the purpose of this note. I merely wish to call attention to the general evolution of the "means" used in artistic pictorial reproduction. The incised line or "intaglio" line, the line sunk beneath the printing surface, finds its expression also in "Etching." In this process lines are bitten into a metal surface by the use of acids.

The printing pigment in this case is forced into the sunken lines and forced out again by the impression onto the paper. The acid used to bite the lines in Etching is a freer means of obtaining an incised line than Engraving and enables the artist to "create" spontaneously.

The only other specifically different means of artistic reproduction that has been discovered is Lithography, invented by Aloys Senefelder about a hundred years ago.

The development of the half-tone plate by Meissenbach (a process used for commercial purposes) about the late sixties, need not be considered in this article.

Lithography is contact printing and in its finer manifestation is the most perfect of all the arts of pictorial reproduction. The main feature of this process depends upon the antipathy of grease and water, and the use of a special limestone.

It is possible by Lithography to make reproductions of artists' drawings that cannot be distinguished from a hand drawing, so

absolutely can the drawing made on the stone (or paper for transferring to stone) be reproduced.

With all these processes—enabling prints or reproductions to be made from the design of the artist—it was natural that individuals should have evolved ways of working, means of expression peculiarly their own, and we find especially in the latter history of the graphic arts all kinds of hybrid mixtures of techniques and experimental combinations occurring. But in the final analysis "the line" may be said to be the foundation from which any graphic pictorial work must proceed.

In other words, great drawing, unhidden or veiled by tonality (even though tone be employed) is the important factor, whether the medium used be Engraving, Etching, or Lithography.

Great drawing is significant drawing. It is the drawing in which the line of the artist is vital, passionate, and spontaneous. Whether he sits before a model or a corner of nature—and is so moved by it as to be able to transfer by the most direct means his impression of it—or whether he has observed and can carry in his memory essential characteristics and give those in a great summary to the spectator, is a matter of individual temperament—but always—the drawing of the great artist bears unmysteriously upon its face the evidence of study and understanding. There are pages and pages of pencil drawings by great artists covered in the margins with drawings of eyes, hands, mouths, still life, which had not been grasped in the main drawing. This earnest search for the seen or remembered truth is one of the chief attributes of great drawing—and allied to this great sincerity will be found the power of conscious abandon, an inevitable mark of mastership in any performance.

Gradually in his desire for individual expression the artist began to make use of the means of reproductive processes for self-expression. He no longer took as his subject an existing picture or design from which to make a reproduction, but invented his own subject, suitable for expression by any one of the processes known, and created his own Engraving, Etching, or Lithograph.

Possibly Rembrandt's etchings offer the best example of the above statement. The master no doubt felt that his immense chiaroscuro was well fitted for expression in black and white. His marvelous etchings are spontaneous performances, done with an understanding

of his medium which has never been equalled. Millet also used etching for original expression, and a hundred other great artists have worked in various media for reproduction.

It is necessary, then, to consider the print of modern times entirely from its own standpoint as a work of art. Engraving, Etching, or Lithograph, with their various individual treatments, belong to-day in a realm of their own.

To understand such prints and enjoy the delicacies and subtleties of their various technical manifestations is the supreme pleasure of the real connoisseur and collector.

It is not what a print represents, but how it represents it, that is of interest to the print lover. In the last resort the technical excellence of any work of art (technical excellence in its broad, full sense, not "technique") forever marks its quality. A beggar in tatters, an old Jew, a flat Dutch landscape and a windmill, impossible anachronisms in Biblical compositions—but Rembrandt transforms them with his needle and acid and a small piece of copper into great works of art. It is the magic of arranged balance, essential proportions, dramatic contrasts of color, for there is color in black and white. It is the clear singing of pure line perfectly modulated that stamps the master and makes of his few strokes on stone or copper an enigma that astonishes and holds the knowing spectator.

To become well acquainted with and realize the purposes of the burin, the hard metal it must cut through, the more yielding wood block, the keenness of the acid that bites the line drawn with the needle through the thin wax ground on the copper plate, is to understand the limitations, the possibilities, of mediums, and to judge of the skill and accomplishment in their use. For all great work is economic, direct and passionate. The artist expressing himself in black and white has double need of all these qualities, for with his simple means bungling and patching are obviously more apparent.

Palaces can be built of the same bricks that make hovels. It is the way the brick is used that is interesting—not the brick.

Only constant and careful discrimination, judgment and comparison can eventually teach the print-lover or collector to distinguish a fine work of art, and to enjoy it.

Goethe was an ardent print collector. He was compelled to

husband his means, and it taught him to purchase and choose sincerely. In 1800 he wrote as follows to his friend Meyer: "Good proofs are often in bad condition, while proofs that are well preserved have no other merit. But in any case, instructive prints have passed into my hands and I am almost in despair when I reflect how much money I spent uselessly before I learned how to secure what are to me invaluable treasures. Let me, however, console myself with the thought that the best is of no use if we do not understand it, and that a thing of little value in itself may become very precious if we know all about it."

It is "knowing ALL about a thing," and thoroughly and earnestly understanding and studying it, that makes it interesting and valuable.

The hope of this association of artists is that it can be helpful

in this regard to the people.

The secretary's report in this first year book of the Society sketches adequately the activities of the young association, and with the adherence and support of new patron members, and the continued work of the active members, there is every reason to believe that a permanent and useful institution has been founded, and will in the years to come have fruitful development.

ALBERT STERNER, Chairman, Board of Governors.

#### Report of the Secretary

N Tuesday evening, January the ninth, 1917, an informal meeting was held in the studio of Mr. Albert Sterner to discuss ways and means of forming a Society of Artists working in the Graphic Arts. There were present Childe Hassam, George Bellows, F. Luis Mora, George Elmer Browne, Boardman Robinson, Albert Sterner, William G. Watts, S. Anthony Guarino, Ernest D. Roth, Allen Lewis and Leo Mielziner. Childe Hassam was chosen active Chairman, and Leo Mielziner Secretary pro tem. A general discussion ensued as to the aims and proposed activities of the Society, which resulted in the definite expression of those present that the artist membership should be confined to Americans actively engaged in the production of original lithographs, etchings and engravings, and kindred means of pictorial reproduction.

A second meeting was held on Wednesday, January the seventeenth, to designate the charter members and to elect permanent officers.

Subsequent meetings were occupied with the formulation of the constitution and by-laws by which the Society's activities were to be governed, under the Board of Governors for 1917-1918. The two following articles of the constitution finally adopted concretely express the raison d'être of the Painter-Gravers of America:

OBJECT: The object of this Society is to further the understanding and appreciation in America of the methods used by artists for the autographic reproduction of their work in engraving, lithography, and etching, and to give exhibitions of such works and provide for their sale.

MEMBERSHIP: The membership of this Society shall consist of two classes: Artist members and Patron members. Artist membership shall be confined to Americans actively engaged in the production of original engravings, lithographs and etchings. All interested in the objects of this Society shall be eligible for patron membership.

The following article exemplifies the spirit governing our exhibitions:

ARTICLE 9: There shall be no jury either in spirit or form. At least one annual exhibition shall be held in New York, time and

place to be designated by the Board of Governors, and at which only prints exhibited for the first time in New York shall be shown. Upon the majority vote at a general meeting preceding this exhibition invitations to exhibit jointly with the Artist members may be extended by the Society to non-members. In addition, it shall be the privilege of every artist member to invite one non-member to exhibit, these invitations to be issued by the Secretary in the name of the sponsor and under the auspices of the Society.

As soon as the Society began to function as regards its active membership, an appeal was issued to the public to enlist patron members, which, among other things, said: "It is the purpose of this Society to hold exhibitions of the prints of contemporary American artists (original engravings, lithographs and etchings), in all of the large cities of the United States, supplemented by lectures and writings which will help the general public to become acquainted with American work of this character and with the interesting data of the technical side of the vast subject. Therefore, the Painter-Gravers of America ask you to become a patron member of the Society and to support it, so that it may further the development of this great branch of the Fine Arts in America."

Some fifty-odd patrons responded to this appeal, so that we felt ourselves strong enough to make an initial bow before the public with our first exhibition. We felt, however, the need of making this exhibition sui generis. We wished that the first fruits should not only have beauty in themselves, but that they should be shown amid surroundings and in a setting that should be not only worthy of the high purposes of the Society, but should be distinctively our own. This meant great activity and much sacrifice of time, trouble and money on the part of the Board of Governors and of various committees, and we are especially indebted to the generosity of Messrs. Childe Hassam, George Bellows and Albert Sterner, who created the funds necessary for the initial expenditure, which were far beyond our meagre budget.

A newly built shop at 26 West 58th Street lent itself peculiarly to our needs, conforming to the space and location requisite for our first exhibition. From designs made by Mr. George Bellows the place was transformed into a suite of beautifully lighted galleries, whose delicate gray walls and tasteful furnishings made a unique

background for the prints. The exhibition was opened on March the twenty-sixth with a private view to the patron members and the press. There were one hundred and ninety-eight prints exhibited, and, in addition to the charter members, we had invited to exhibit as guests the following artists: John Taylor Arms, Gustave Baumann, Edward Borein, Walter Duff, Anne Goldthwaite, Walter Hale, John Held, Edward Hopper, Troy Kinney, William Auerbach Levy, Ethel Mars, Jerome Myers, Will Simmons, J. André Smith, and Dorothy Stevens.

We were welcomed with unprecedented acclaim by the whole metropolitan press, who were unanimous also in their recognition of the fact that a society had been launched whose claim to public patronage was well-founded. The sales accruing amounted to over fourteen hundred dollars.

Unfortunately, the élan of our initial activity was abruptly checked, and necessarily, by the country's call to arms. Larger and more essential interests usurped public attention. The ideals our Society desired to foster and had begun to disseminate were, however, too vital to be entirely submerged. Though the fires were banked, we still made headway. During the summer of 1917, through the Society of Museum Directors,—and we hereby express our indebtedness to Mr. Clyde H. Burroughs, President,—we were able to arrange for a circuit exhibition of the Painter-Gravers of America with the following schedule; October: Rochester, Memorial Art Gallery; November: Buffalo, Academy of Fine Arts; December: Cleveland Art Museum; January: Cincinnati Museum of Fine Arts; February: Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute; March: Toledo Museum of Art; April: Milwaukee Art Museum; May: Detroit Museum of Art.

Though war conditions presaged the unlikelihood of eager interest and a repetition of the success of our first exhibition, it was thought necessary to give a second Annual Exhibition. This was held at the Milch Galleries from December the tenth to December the thirty-first, with some ninety-odd prints shown. The intense cold prevailing during that period was responsible for a very slender attendance and accentuated the fact that we were but marking time. Though we had requests from out-of-town museums for this

second exhibit, freight conditions were such that we decided it would be unwise to accept.

Since then we have concentrated our efforts to produce the first Year Book of the Society. It may interest the recipient of this volume to learn how we proceeded to the selection of the artist contributing the print which accompanies the Year Book. Three names among the active members were selected by secret ballot, resulting in the selection of Eugene Higgins, Rudolph Ruzicka and Mahonri Young. Lots were then drawn among these three, and the selection fell to Eugene Higgins. Mr. Ruzicka was selected chairman of the committee for the publishing of the Year Book, but owing to unforeseen circumstances relinquished his office. The book has been issued under the direction of the Board of Governors.

The Annual Meeting for the election of officers for 1918-19 was held at the studio of Mr. Albert Sterner on Wednesday, March the sixth, resulting in the following Board of Governors: Albert Sterner, Chairman; George Bellows, Vice-Chairman; Leo Mielziner, Secretary-Treasurer; Ernest Haskell, Eugene Higgins, Rudolph Ruzicka, Mahonri Young.

With the first Year Book launched we hope to effect a more concrete and permanent existence by acquiring a fixed home. We are not merely an exhibiting society, occupied solely with the business of such an enterprise. Our basic raison d'être was the formation of a band of craftsmen who might work out the many technical problems of the graphic arts with and for each other, in their own house. Here the lay public, as represented by the patron members, would become acquainted with the successive stages of making prints, of the different states of a plate, the preparing of the lithographic stone, the breathless moment when the first impression is drawn from the plate or stone, and all the various incidents and accidents the joys and sorrows that occur in the production of a print. Surely such interrelation between the craftsman and the collector will gradually create a living solidarity, and in such solidarity stimulate a propitious atmosphere for the florescence of all the graphic arts.

An active committee is now at work on the proposition of seeking a proper home, and we hope before long to announce a satisfactory consummation of this ambition.

LEO MIELZINER,
Secretary.

#### List of Artist Members

Charter Members

George Bellows, N.A. Frank W. Benson, N.A. George Elmer Brown Arthur S. Covey H. K. Eby S. Anthony Guarino Ernest Haskell Childe Hassam, N.A. Eugene Higgins Lester G. Hornby Earl Horter Allen Lewis Huc. Mazelet Luquiens John Marin F. Luis Mora, N.A. C. F. W. Mielatz, A.N.A. Leo Mielziner Howard McCormick B. J. O. Nordfeldt Henry Raleigh Boardman Robinson Ernest D. Roth Rudolph Ruzicka Maurice Stern Albert Sterner, A.N.A. John Sloan Harry Townsend J. Alden Weir, P.N.A. Mahonri Young, A.N.A.

146 East 19th Street, New York Salem, Mass. 41 Union Square, New York 5 Bank Street, New York 5 Bank Street, New York 6 East 15th Street, New York 108 West 57th Street, New York 130 West 57th Street, New York 45 East 34th Street, New York 473 Pawtucket St., Pawtucket, R. I. 627 So. 49th Street, Philadelphia 1232 Fulton Street, Brooklyn 254 Lawrence St., New Haven 4 Sixth St., Weehawken, N. J. 142 East 18th Street, New York 422 West 160th Street, New York 52 West 12th Street, New York Leonia, N. J. 135 McDougal Street, New York Westport, Conn. 126 East 23rd Street, New York 232 West 14th Street, New York 954 Lexington Avenue, New York 51 West 10th Street, New York 1 Lexington Avenue, New York 88 Washington Place, New York 244 Waverly Place, New York 471 Park Avenue, New York Leonia, N. J.

#### List of Artist Members

Elected Active Members

John Taylor Arms
Gustave Baumann
Anna Goldthwaite
John Held
William Auerbach Levy
Ethel Mars
Jerome Myers
J. Andre Smith
Dorothy Stevens
Will Simmons

55 Willow Street, Brooklyn Wyoming, N. Y.
35 West 10th Street
736 Riverside Drive
45 East 34th Street
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129 East 10th Street
New Milford, Conn.
2255 Broadway
6 East 15th Street

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25 Madison Avenue, New York
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Westport, Conn.
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222 West 59th Street, New York
993 Fifth Avenue, New York
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